

Inquiries of the Ministry

I understand there was a great deal of difficulty in determining who was "live Mike" and who "dead Mike", and possibly the C.B.C. may be forgiven for having made some mistake.

LABOUR CONDITIONS**UNEMPLOYMENT—INQUIRY AS TO OPINION OF MINISTER OF FINANCE**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Paul Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, the last question asked by the hon. member for Port Arthur suggests one for the Minister of Finance. May I ask the Minister of Finance whether, as a result of his rather extended tour last week, he is now convinced that there is an emergency unemployment problem in Canada?

Mr. Benidickson: He said so.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the Minister of Finance responds to this question I should caution him that it does not seem to me to be a proper question to introduce on the orders of the day. There have been exceptions dealing with some specific phases of unemployment, but it seems improper to me to throw in the whole subject in that way.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): With great respect, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: If the contending members cannot settle which one shall take the floor, I think I shall have to allow the Minister of Finance to raise his question of privilege.

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I take strong exception to the suggestion that at any time I have suggested there was an emergency in Canada. On the contrary, I expressly disclaim it. The only emergency I know of is the one existing in the minds of members of the Liberal party.

Mr. Benidickson: Nobody is unemployed.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, since you allowed the question of the hon. member for Port Arthur, which I am sure most objective persons would admit was a little more frivolous than the question I put to the Minister of Finance, I am sure you will not mind my asking the Minister of Finance again whether as a result of his extended tour he is not now convinced that there is—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Martin (Essex East):—a very serious level of unemployment in this country that calls for a recognition by the government of an emergency situation.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member has disregarded my caution—

An hon. Member: It is quite habitual.

Mr. Speaker:—if I may put it as mildly as that. He is in effect asking for an opinion on a very broad subject, and I am not satisfied that it is a proper question for the orders of the day. If I allowed the minister to deal with it I am sure it would result in an exchange which could only be interpreted as a debate.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Hon. gentlemen can do what they want but they are not going to prevent us from discussing this matter of unemployment in the house.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Essex East.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I rose to discuss the point of order but you acceded, and properly so, to the right of the offended Minister of Finance to speak first. Speaking to the point of order, I suggest with great confidence to Your Honour that a question addressed to the Minister of Finance in respect of unemployment is not merely asking him for an opinion but is giving him the opportunity of declaring whether or not there is to be a revision of government policy regarding the foremost domestic problem now facing the country.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. member would confine his remarks to the question of order I would be glad to hear him, but when he gets into arguments relating to the question itself that is a different matter.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I was about to say that if the question which the hon. member for Port Arthur put to the Minister of National Revenue a moment ago was a proper one, surely it is proper for me to ask the Minister of Finance whether or not his contact with the people has convinced him that there is serious unemployment in Canada.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member will have plenty of opportunity to do that in course of the debate which we are waiting to begin.